Unit .02

Session .02

God Foreshadows His Promise

Scripture

Genesis 22:1-6,7-14

1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"
"Here I am," he answered. **2** "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." **3** So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. **4** On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. **5** Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." **6** Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. … **7** Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father." And he replied, "Here I am, my son." Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" **8** Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together. **9** When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. **10** Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. **11** But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am." **12** Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." **13** Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. **14** And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide, so today it is said: "It will be provided on the LORD's mountain."

Intro Options

Main Point:
God calls His people to trust Him completely.

Option 1

If the weather permits, you may want to go outside for this activity. If not, push any chairs or tables to the side and create room for students to make a circle. You will also need two blindfolds for this activity.

Instruct students to form a large circle. Place two volunteers in the center of the circle, blindfold them, and give them pairing names. For example, you might use peanut butter and jelly, Rey and Finn, ketchup and French fries, cookies and milk, Bugs and Daffy, or another complementary combination like that.

Using these code names, you would essentially be playing Marco-Polo on land. One person is trying to find the other to tag him/her, while the other person is trying run away and avoid being tagged. They will only be able to use their voices and code names to find/avoid each other.

The point of this exercise is to teach students to trust the sound of another's voice to guide them, even when they cannot see, similar to the way Abraham had to trust God to provide another sacrifice (and the promise) even though he couldn't see exactly how God would provide at the time.

Option 2

Give each student a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Tell students to imagine that you will all take a trip together, and they need to make a packing list. Spin the following details in your own voice and personality, but essentially: You're their travel agent and tour guide. Here are the details about your trip:

- This trip will take a while.
- You don't need to know where we're going. I'll let you know when we arrive.
- You should pack everything, because I don't know when we'll return.
- Yes, I'm asking you to leave behind a lot, but I need you to trust me. This journey will be so good for you.

Then ask:

- **Would you take the trip?**

Sometimes, God asks us to do difficult things without giving us a glimpse into His plan. Like Abram, we have two choices: We can stay or we can go. Which would you choose?

TEACHING PLAN

In Abraham's one-hundredth year, he and Sarah finally had a son, and they named him Isaac (Gen. 21:1-7). Twenty-five years after God first promised He would make Abraham into a great nation, the son of promise was finally born. Maybe it wasn't fulfilled in the timing Abraham and Sarah had expected, but God made good on His promise. Everything was finally as it should have been.

But several years later, God came to Abraham again. However, this time, His message was different. There was no reminder of His promises to provide and protect. Instead, He issued a command for Abraham. God was about to put the patriarch to the test.

Read Genesis 22:1-6.

- **Why do you think God would test someone with what they love the most?**

God's command to Abraham was delivered in just one sentence, but each following word surely crushed the elderly man's soul even more.

"Take your son, your only son." Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, but God focused Abraham's attention on the son of promise. This son, Isaac, was an embodiment of hope for Abraham and Sarah. He was proof of God's favor on and love for them. God promised this son and gave him to Abraham and Sarah despite their advanced age and doubt.

This couldn't have made any sense to Abraham. What was God doing? The future promise was based on Isaac and the family he would have. How would God bring those promises to pass—including bringing blessing to all the people of the world—if he killed Isaac? There was no way for Abraham to reconcile God's promises and this command.

- **This story is as much about the sacrifice of Abraham's will as it is about the sacrifice of Isaac. What are some things you have had to sacrifice to follow more after God?**

"Isaac, whom you love." This was not an academic exercise for Abraham. Isaac was not merely a fulfillment of God's promises—a sign of God's faithfulness. Isaac was the son whom Abraham loved.

Although love was implied earlier in the Bible, this is the first time the word is used. Notice that the first use of the term *love* is not between a husband and wife, although there were certainly opportunities for that before. God chose to reserve the first mention of love for a loving father preparing to sacrifice his only son. God, the brilliant and perfect communicator, wants this picture to saturate our understanding of love.

- **What does this first mention of love between a father and son communicate about God's love and the sacrifice of His Son?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God calls His people to trust Him completely.

Genesis 22

22:1. God does not test to lead people toward failure; He tests to give His people the opportunity to prove the quality of their faith. God's intention is to test us—to place affliction in our lives—because these afflictions produce endurance, which produces character, and which produces hope (Rom. 5:3-4). It is difficult to see in the moment, but God's tests are for our good. They grow us, strengthen us, and give us the confidence we need to persevere through future difficulties.

But here's something else we need to understand about God's tests. There is only One person who knows when He is testing us, and His name was not Abraham. God's tests are not easy; what grows us rarely is. Not knowing what God is doing only adds to that difficulty. God's tests can leave us confused, distressed, and heartbroken. But it is in these moments of weakness that the strength God gives us shines through.

22:4. We know that the mountain God chose was not random. Moriah was the region near where Jerusalem would later be built. It's also possible that the temple itself would later be built on this mountaintop. But there may have been another reason. While each step of that forty-five-mile journey may have been painful, each may have been gracious as well. This journey may have been a gift to Abraham; the opportunity for the patriarch to wrestle with God's command, and perhaps to develop the faith he would need as he raised a knife over his beloved son.

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 64, DDG)*

Christ as Sacrifice

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadow Christ as the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all" (Heb. 10:10,14) take away sins.

TEACHING PLAN

This forty-five-mile journey to Moriah would have taken Abraham and Isaac at least the better part of three days (maybe three full days). While Abraham seemed to have wanted to get this over with as quickly (he started his journey early in the morning), he would be forced to walk alongside his beloved son for a trip that lasted at least two nights.

- **What have you learned about God and yourself through God's past tests?**

Read Genesis 22:7-14.

At what seemed to be the last moment, the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham and instructed him not to harm Isaac (v. 11). Mercifully, the test was over. Abraham had proven his faithfulness. It was evident that Abraham feared God because he was willing to let go of his son, what was most important and valuable to him. If Abraham did not withhold his son from God, he would not hold anything else back from Him either. By not holding anything back from God, Abraham revealed what, or who, was most valuable to him: God.

God's call to us is comparable. We should be willing to sacrifice everything for Him, whether He calls on us to sacrifice it or not. This was Jesus' message, as well. When Jesus saw the great crowds following Him, He turned to them and challenged their understanding of what was required to follow Him. Those who wanted to follow Him had to be willing to sacrifice their families and even their own lives (Luke 14:25-35). Everything.

Activity

Before the session, gather a large poster board and markers. Place the poster board and markers at a central location in the room. Ask students to think of the one thing they are really tempted to hold back from God. Ask them to come up and write that thing on the poster board. Then, ask students to prayerfully release that item/person/area of life to God.

- **What are some things you are tempted to withhold from God? Why?**

God prevented Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, but He did not stop there. Abraham looked up, saw a ram caught in the thicket, and sacrificed it in place of his son, Isaac. Abraham saw the ram as God's gracious provision and substitute for Isaac, and named the place: "The Lord Will Provide" (v. 14). A sacrifice was necessary, but God spared Isaac's life by providing another to stand in his place.

This is what God does for us with His Son. Because of our sin, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). As a result, we were dead in our sin and under God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3), unable to do anything about our situation. God the Father was not only willing, but He also provided His only Son, Jesus, to be the lamb sacrificed in our place (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). Jesus was nailed to the cross as our substitute for sin, taking the payment of our sin on Himself to provide us with forgiveness and His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

- **God showed His love for us by giving up His Son. How does this encourage you to love Him more and be more committed to Him?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Genesis 22

22:5. When Abraham and Isaac parted ways with the two servants, the patriarch told them, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you" (Gen. 22:5). While no explanation of his statement is given in that chapter, the writer of Hebrews offered an extended commentary on this piece of Scripture to help us understand what was going on in Abraham's mind and heart (Heb. 11:17-19).

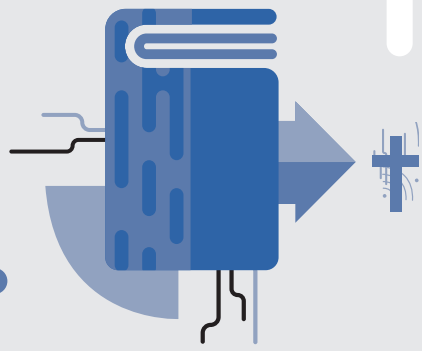
Why was Abraham able to tell the two servants that he and his son would return? Why was he able to tie his only son, his beloved son, and lay him on top of the altar? Why was he able to lift a knife, ready to spill Isaac's blood? What made such surrender to God possible was Abraham's faith that He can do the impossible; Abraham believed God could raise his son from the dead. Isaac was the son of promise, the next in a single line leading to the one God promised in Eden (Gen. 3:15). Abraham believed this. And yet God was calling on him to sacrifice Isaac. The only way Abraham could reconcile God's command was to believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

What we need to see here is the depth of Abraham's faith. He was ready to follow through with the sacrifice of Isaac. He didn't know it was a test; He was seeking to be obedient to the Lord. His obedience was made easier because He believed God could do the impossible and raise his son from the dead.

God stopped Abraham before he could plunge the knife in his son, sparing his life. But in a sense Isaac did die and was resurrected. That is what the writer of Hebrews needs us to see as he wrapped up this account in the "hall of faith." Abraham received Isaac back, "figuratively speaking" (Heb. 11:19). Abraham believed God could do the impossible and when He did, the patriarch received what God had provided. He did not sigh with relief thinking he had dodged a bullet. He understood that Isaac was indeed given back to him from the dead. Surely Abraham never looked at his son the same way again after that day.

(p. 66, DDG) Christ Connection

Isaac's question "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" echoes through the pages of the Old Testament. This question was ultimately answered at the beginning of the New Testament when John the Baptist saw Jesus of Nazareth and declared, "Look the Lamb of God"(John 1:36)!



GOD FORESHADOWS HIS PROMISE

Genesis 22:1–6, 7–14

GOD FORESHADOWS HIS PROMISE

God calls His people to trust Him completely.

JESUS CONNECTION

Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" is ultimately answered when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:36). Just as God provided a ram to take Isaac's place, God provided Jesus to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins—and the sins of the whole world."

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

HEAD

What was the purpose of God testing Abraham's faith?

What evidence of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice for God do you see?

HEART

How does it make you feel when you give up what you see as valuable—time, money or things—to help someone else?

What does the Bible tell us about God's character? How can that knowledge help you trust Him enough to sacrifice for Him or others?

HANDS

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Write a note to God telling Him what that verse means to you.